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## **ATTORNEY GENERAL OBTAINS INJUNCTION AGAINST DUBIOUS CHARITIES**

BISMARCK – Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem has reached a settlement with an out of state fundraiser that illegally collected about \$30,000 in contributions from North Dakota residents.

The settlement, entered as an order in Burleigh County district court today, named the Association for Disabled Firefighters, Coalition of Police & Sheriffs, and American Veterans Relief Foundation, all of California, and their professional fundraiser, Public Awareness and Duane Kolve, of Wisconsin.

“We received complaints that Public Awareness was telling people that the Association for Disabled Firefighters would use the donations for ‘children’s burn centers’ in North Dakota,” said Stenehjem. “We have no such children’s burn centers in North Dakota.” Stenehjem barred Public Awareness from conducting solicitations while his Consumer Protection Division investigated the complaints.

The investigation also revealed Public Awareness used private mail service centers in various North Dakota communities to retrieve charitable contributions, creating the false impression that the fundraiser was a local organization. “These entities played on the knowledge that donors are more likely to give to a local organization,” said Stenehjem.

Stenehjem sued the defendants in October 2002, alleging they engaged in “false and deceptive acts” and the charitable solicitations were illegal because the organizations were not licensed in North Dakota and Public Awareness was not registered as a professional fundraiser.

Under the terms of the settlement, the defendants cannot conduct any charitable solicitations in North Dakota for 18 months and must pay \$30,000 in lieu of civil penalties. Stenehjem will distribute \$25,000 to North Dakota organizations engaged in fire protection, law enforcement, or public safety activities, and the remainder will cover investigation costs and attorney’s fees. The defendants will also forfeit the donations it raised illegally, which were recovered from the local mail boxes.

According to Parrell Grossman, Director of the Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division, this case helped educate the public and raise awareness of misleading or fraudulent charitable solicitations. “Here the Attorney General has established for these defendants, and similar charities, a line they are not permitted to cross when it comes to misrepresentations,” Grossman said.